

Why the Hoca's Creditor Laughed

Nasreddin Hoca once owed some money to a man who called at his house every day to collect it. Each day the man demanded his money, and each day Hoca sent him away empty-handed, saying, "Come back tomorrow and I shall pay you then."

After this had gone on for some time, the man became very unpleasant about the debt. He shouted at the Hoca and he threatened to take him before a kadı in order to collect his money. One day Hoca said to his wife, "My creditor is going to call again today. When he does, you are to say that I have gone to Horasan.¹ Tell him that when I return, I shall bring some thorn bushes with me. We shall plant a row of thorn bushes around our house. The sheep flocks of our neighbors will rub against the thorn hedge, and when they do so, they will leave shreds of wool on the thorns. We shall then collect the wool; you will spin it into thread and from the thread you will make cloth; I shall then take the cloth to market, and with the money we get from the cloth, we shall pay him the money we owe him."

Thorns

Shortly afterwards, the creditor arrived and knocked on the door. Hoca was hiding upstairs, and his wife opened the door. The creditor spoke to her. "The Hoca had a small account to settle with me. I have come to collect the money he owes me."

¹Horasan, a city in central Asia, known for fine rugs. It is probably mentioned here simply to indicate a far-away place, one from which the Hoca would not return very soon.

The Hoca's wife replied; "The Hoca has gone to Horasan to buy some thorn bushes. When he returns with these, he will plant them all around our house. The sheep flocks of our neighbors will rub against the thorn hedge, and when they do so, they will leave shreds of wool on the thorns. We shall then collect the wool. I will spin it into thread and from the thread make cloth. The Hoca will take the cloth to market, and from the money he gets for it, he will pay you what he owes you."

When the creditor heard this, he burst out laughing. He laughed so
He stuck his head out
the window and said, "Of course you can laugh now that you think you are going to be paid!"²

²Absent-mindedness is one of the qualities of Nasreddin Hoca. This, combined with his irresistible urge to comment on everything that happens, often undoes him in the tales told about him. He frequently has the last word when discretion would dictate silence.